

Got an overnight parking ticket this month? Help a kid have a merry Christmas!

By Brock Weir

Aurora is set to implement its overnight parking restrictions for the winter season this Sunday, November 15 running through April 15.

But, if you're one of the many who find it difficult to make the transition right off the bat, collecting a parking ticket or two in the process, there could be a silver lining as early as this week.

Council signed off on a ?Toys for Tickets? program, which will run through December 1.

Taking a page out of the playbook in other municipalities, those running afoul of bylaw enforcement officers overnight will be able to exchange paying off their ticket in exchange for a brand new toy that will be donated to children in need, collected through December 9.

But these will not just be any brand new toy. Any contributions must be in its original packaging, unwrapped, and have the original receipt attached ? to make sure it is of equal or greater value to the ticket. And more than one toy can be donated to make up for any shortfall from just one toy.

?Bylaw staff became aware of the well-received program operating in the Town of Orillia whereby residents could submit a toy for the price of the ticket during the first several weeks of the Christmas season,? said Techa van Leeuwen, Aurora's Director of Bylaw Services, in a report before Council this week. ?The Toys for Tickets concept in some form has been used and well-received by the public in municipalities across Canada including Orillia, Cambridge, Kingston, Oshawa and New Tecumseth.

?After researching the program, staff have determined the Toys for Ticket program would both serve to educate the public as well as providing donations of toys for local charities. Officers will distribute a Toys for Tickets pamphlet with every ticket they issue during the first two weeks outlining the details of the program.?

Participation, she notes, will be voluntary, and will only apply to tickets issued as ?no parking anytime between 2 a.m. and 6 a.m.?

?Typically during the first two weeks of the seasonal parking restrictions program, officers issue warnings instead of tickets as educational awareness,? said Ms. van Leeuwen. ?Therefore, implementing this program will not result in lost revenue. Toys for Tickets would likely generate some income that was not collected in the past by those who choose not to participate in the voluntary toy donation program. In addition, it would provide support to the community, especially to those less fortunate.?